

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH LETTER:

D.W. Cowling and D.M. Robins. Rate of Illegal Tobacco Sales to Minors Varies by Sign Type in California. *American Journal of Public Health*. November 2000, Vol. 90, No. 11, 1792-3.

Objectives: To determine if the type of sign at retail stores is associated with illegal tobacco sales to minors.

Methods: A youth purchase survey in a random sample of retail stores throughout California in 1998 and 1999.

Results: Descriptive statistics and a logistic regression reveal retail stores that only display a tobacco industry sponsored sign, such as "We Card" and "It's the Law", sell to minors at a rate equivalent to not having any signs. In contrast, stores with only the government-sponsored signs sell at a significantly lower rate than the stores with no signs.

In 1998 and 1999, stores with tobacco industry signs only or with no signs at all sold to youth at higher rates than did stores with government signs only or with both government and tobacco industry signs. Having only tobacco industry signs such as "We Card" and "It's the Law" is equivalent to having no sign at all.

In 1999 stores with tobacco industry only signs and stores with no warning sign sold tobacco to underage youth 22.2% and 23.1%, respectively. Only 10.5% of stores with the government sign only sold tobacco to youth, while 13.1% of stores with both the government and tobacco industry signs did not comply with the law.

A statistical analysis of the data showed the government signage had a protective effect in comparison to no warning sign, whereas the tobacco industry signage was equivalent to having no sign at all. The analysis controlled for store type, age and sex of the youth, age and sex of the clerk and self-service or requesting of tobacco products.